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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Wednesday, - May 7, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "BELOW THE SAFETY LINE". Information from the Farm Security Administration. U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Did you know that 45,000,000 of us in this country of ours are said to be living below the safety line of good nutrition? About a third of all the families in the United States are not getting the kinds and amounts of food they need for health and strength. Forty percent of the farm families are not as well fed as they should be. That's amazing, isn't it? And very depressing.

Today the Farm Security Administration reports some health facts it is calling to the attention of its borrower families, and some suggestions it is making to improve farm family diets. You know, one of the best ways to get action on a plan or program is to convince folks they ought to act. Tell them "Why?" and chances are the "What?" and "How?" will take care of themselves.

The "Why?" in this case is that food is extremely important to health and health is important to all of us. Insufficient food or the wrong kind of food endangers health. It may lead to rickets, pellagra, or other diseases of malnutrition.....or indirectly to anemia, tuberculosis, and nervous troubles. It may cause bad teeth, and bad teeth lead to so many ills. It can reduce your vitality --sap your strength and keep you generally below par. It can make you feel tired and lazy, and be inefficient in your work. It can age you, produce digestive disorders, give you different kinds of aches and pains, lower your resistance to disease, spoil your good disposition, and put you in the dumps a lot of the time.

Many people don't even know their diets aren't good. They think if they get enough to eat and "aren't hungry", they're all right. But there may be hidden

hungers. They may not be getting certain things they need - minerals and vitamins contained in fresh vegetables, fruit, milk, eggs, and meat. With most deficiencies there are also excesses. A family who doesn't have enough leafy green vegetables is likely to eat too many starches and sweets and fats.

On the other hand, families who eat proper food usually have strong bodies, clear heads, and a cheerful attitude. They feel better, look better, and work better. They have fewer colds, better digestion, fewer "bad teeth", and more resistance to disease. They lose less time from work, get more accomplished, pay fewer doctors' bills, keep their weight nearer normal, are more agreeable to be around, are a lot happier, and probably live longer.

On the farm, one of the best answers to the diet problem, of course, is a good year around garden that will supply vegetables, not only to serve fresh but to store and can until the next garden season. It is especially important to have plenty of tomatoes winter and summer. There should be fruit trees and berry bushes to provide fruit on the table once or twice a day; cows to furnish a year-around supply of milk, cream, and butter; enough chickens to provide meat and eggs all year, instead of just a few months in the Spring. Farm families should produce some other kind of meat too, besides pork - some beef or lamb perhaps. Maybe they can get fish or game occasionally.

Naturally families who have little money can't afford to buy all the food they need for good diet, but they can afford to grow it. In fact they can't afford not to..... A lot of people in the South used to grow cotton right up their back door. They didn't think they could spare space for a garden. They thought they had to put every inch of ground in cotton..... so they could sell cotton and buy food. Now many realize that if they grow food, they don't have to sell anything to buy it. And they can have more food and better food for less money.

Hundreds of families who used to live mostly on fatback, cornbread, and molasses - with occasional beans, sweet potatoes, and turnip greens - now have plenty of fresh tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, cabbage, greens, beets, beans, potatoes, peas, corn, squash, and turnips in the garden. A lot who used to feel they couldn't give up a foot of cotton land for pasture now keep several cows and some hogs.

The Government has stepped in too, to lend a hand. It is helping Southern people reduce cotton and produce food. This spring, as you probably know, the Department of Agriculture worked out a supplementary cotton program. According to it, farmers who want to, may earn up to $25 - in some cases $50 - in cotton stamps for growing less cotton. With these stamps they can buy cotton goods. Any cotton farmer can also earn an additional $3 for growing and storing more food at home.

Well, $3 isn't much, but it will buy a lot of garden seed, or some jars for canning. Best of all, less land in cotton means more land in gardens, pasture, and feed crops. And that land is needed! Listen: In the ten principal cotton states, the 1935 farm census showed that nearly 700,000 farm families didn't have home gardens, more than 750,000 didn't have milk cows, nearly 10,000 didn't have hogs, and nearly 300,000 didn't have chickens. Think of it! No wonder there are so many dietary troubles in these states - and there are thousands of cases in every state in the Union.

But with the prospect of some two million cotton acres being taken out of cotton this year, and turned into food and feed crops, under the new supplementary cotton program, health prospects are better. The land is 'pleased' too. Land that is tired of 'wearing' cotton is getting some new clothing....and taking a vacation. Wornout and exhausted land is getting a leave of absence to rest up. Land that is starved is getting nourishment. Some of it is already in green pasture, or in alfalfa, clover, field peas, and soy beans that enrich and feed it. Much of it is in gardens and truck crops that feed people.

Although borrowers of the Farm Security Administration have always followed a live-at home plan and grown most of their food and feed on the farm, those in the South are planning to produce more than ever this year. They expect to take full advantage of the cotton plan - which incidentally doesn't change the working of the present AAA program or other programs at all. It is an addition. If you yourself are interested in the new plan, you can get full details about it from your local farm or home supervisor, county agent, home demonstration agent, or AAA committeeman.....

Or maybe you think none of this applies to you, because you don't grow cotton. But it does. You can still give your family's health a boost through better diet. You can grow a bigger better garden, and produce more meat, milk, eggs, cream, and butter on your own farm.